that no regularisation should take place. Till the writ is disposed of by the Supreme Court, we can't do anything. Since the Act came into existence, we had regularised the pattas through all the State Governments, those families are residing well within the purview of the Forest Act; inside the forest land, their pattas were regularised; those villages were converted into revenue villages, and the title given by the District Collector or by the District Magistrate holds good till this date. After eighties, no doubt, there are some problems with tribals; the legal lacuna is there; our hands are tied. In spite of that, the Ministry is deeply concerned over this problem. We are making all efforts to lift the ban; the writ is pending before the Supreme Court. As soon as the Stay Order is vacated, we will give it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all right.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Sir, it is I who launched "Project Tiger" in 1971. I was Chairman of the Indian Board for Wildlife; I launched "Project Tiger", and I have been following it all these years.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he has come across reports that illegal mining and illegal felling of forests are taking place in some of our national parks as a result of a malign alignment between corrupt contractors and corrupt officials, and, sometimes, political leaders. Is the Minister aware of it? For example, in Kanha, I understand that there is some illegal mining. Will he assure the House that steps will be taken to see that illegal mining does not take place in all the game sanctuaries and the habitat is not disturbed?

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, I have not come across any specific case, as the hon. Member has mentioned. If there is any specific case, let him write to me. I will definitely look into it.

Broad gauge line in Lumding-Silchar Sector

*163. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the progress of the work on broad gauge line between Lumding-Silchar sector of North-Frontier Railways;

(b) by when this project is expected to be completed;

(c) whether Government will take initiative to provide the additional funds from DONER and other sources to complete the work;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) The gauge conversion of Lumding-Silchar-Jiribam and Badarpur-Baraigram is in progress. On Lumding-Silchar section, land acquisition for 342 hectare out of total 368 hectare has already been completed. Earthwork to the tune of 195.87 lakh cubic metres out of total 292.4 lakh-cum. and 181 bridges out of total 379 bridges have already been completed. Work on one tunnel is in progress and tenders for other 18 tunnels is under finalisation. The anticipated cost of the project is Rs. 1496.42 crore. An amount of Rs. 265.32 crore has been spent on this project upto 31.3.2004 and an outlay of Rs. 70 crore has been proposed in the budget 2004-05.

(b) No target date of completion has yet been fixed. The completion of the project would depend upon availability of resources.

(c) to (e) In the past, efforts were made to get additional funds from Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources. However, it had not been feasible to allocate additional funds for Railway projects from this pool due to other pressing demands of various States. Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) have advised that funds through Non-Lapsable Central Pool are provided only to those projects which are submitted by the North Eastern States in their priority list. Normally these projects do not include Central Sectors like Railways.

SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Sir, the Minister has given a detailed reply about the gauge conversion of Lumding-Silchar-Jiribam and Badarpur-Baraigram. But it is not satisfactory because Lumding-Silchar line connects Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya and it is the most important project. It was started in 1996. Earlier an amount of Rs. 800 crores was allocated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You don't make a speech. You come to your question.

SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: I am not making a speech, Sir. I want to say that this is the most important project, as far as the North East and southern part of Assam are concerned. The previous Government had given some funds. But it was meagre amount. They are not taking it seriously. This time also they have allocated meagre funds in the Railway Budget. You treat this project on a par with the projects in Kashmir. About 1.5 crores of people are residing in these areas and there are hilly tracts. So, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether he has taken any serious steps to complete this project like the projects in Kashmir or projects like the Konkan Railway. When you take up a project like this, it should be completed in a time-bound manner; otherwise, it will take 20-25 years and the people will suffer like anything. I want a specific reply from the hon. Minister whether he will pay special attention to this project.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, the hon. Member is quite aware of this scheme as such. From 1996-97 onwards, it has been an ongoing scheme. The then Prime Minister of India, Shri Deve Gowda, had taken a new initiative to see that a Non-Lapsable Central Pool Fund was created so that the North-Eastern Region could be assisted. Accordingly, a Non-Lapsable Central Pool Fund was created, namely, that 10 per cent of the budgetary allocation of each Ministry or Department should be earmarked to this Pool. Later, when the Railway Board approached for money from that Fund, they said that it was not meant for the Railways and it was only for specific purposes of that region. So, we can't lay our hands on that Fund. At any rate, we have now been asked to give 10 per cent of the budgetary allocation to this project as such. We understand the problem of the North-Eastern Region. The project itself costs about Rs. 1,500 crores and we have already spent about Rs. 265 crores on that. The balance is about Rs. 1,200 crores. It will take time. We are taking steps to mobilise funds. But we are only going by the budgetary allocations. As the hon. Member has mentioned, Kashmir is treated on a different footing and separate allocation is made. If he makes a request, we will take up the matter with the Government.

SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Sir, the Minister has already explained that there is no possibility for getting funds from the Non

Lapsable Central Pool Fund. The former Railway Minister, Shri Nitish Kumar, had stated in this House that he had discussed with the DONER and the North-Eastern Council, and they had promised that they would give funds. I don't know why the present Government is not taking any interest in getting funds from the DONER. I would like to know from the hon. Minister from which source he will get the money for this project. If it is not possible to get money from DONER or the North Eastern Council, from which source will he get money?

SHRI R. VELU: I can explain it to the hon. Member. Sir, for the North East Region alone, we have got a throw forward of about Rs. 6000 crore in respect of all on-going schemes, not to speak of about Rs. 46,000 crore of throw forward for the country as a whole. That is our difficult financial position. We will try our best to accommodate it. Sir, the hon. Member also knows that although we make budgetary allocation of 10 per cent, we cut our corners here and there and give some additional support also. Sir, we will try our best to see what can be done.

SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, work for gauge conversion from Fakiragram to Dhubri under the new Jalpaiguri-New Bongoigaon Section was sanctioned in 2003. But no work is being done there. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any amount has been sanctioned for that work. If so, actually, when will the work start?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, I will get the details and furnish them to the hon. Member.

Status of Sher-e-Kashmir University

*164. SHRI T.S. BAJWA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of proposed Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture, Science and Technology in Jammu and Kashmir;

(b) the total amount sanctioned for the purpose and the amount utilized so far;

(c) the land acquired for the purpose so far, and the compensation paid to the land-owners; and